

The Rural Beautification Society has created a program which involves hundreds of Islanders every year. They have successfully developed, maintained and expanded this program for more than thirty years. The work done by the Society has been a strong factor in the appeal our rural beauty holds for our year-round residents and our visitors.

New dimensions added to the Society's program have been supported by the Minister of the Environment and his Deputy Minister Art Hiscott, the Natural History Society of Prince Edward Island and the Environmental Advisory Council. These new dimensions include:

1. A strong emphasis on tree planting to provide protection, to conserve energy and to enhance the beauty of our homes. Many cash prizes are being offered this year to encourage participation in this program.
2. A Community Improvement and Litter Control Competition requiring the submission by the communities of an on-going Litter Control Program for their own community.
3. The Natural Beauty and Preservation Competition encouraging competitors to adapt their landscaping to the natural surroundings and avoid the measured, stiff style so often seen to provide habitat for song birds and other wild creatures on their property.

The awards for the Natural Beauty Competition will be provided by Dr. & Mrs. J.P. Lantz and Mr. & Mrs. Allison West - members of the Natural History Society

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Sheep and Crows

It is important to strike the right colour balance in a pasture - therefore I have sheep and I have crows. Most of my sheep are white; the crows are the usual black. It is comforting to look at extremes and not have to worry about shades of grey.

This year, as always, these animals are interacting in their unsubtle ways. The crows scavenge some of the sheep's feed, and in the appropriate season (March) start lining their nests with wool. The wool-gathering method is standard: a crow lands on the ground beside a sheep, inspects it, then jumps on its back and tears out a beakful of nice natural fiber. The sheep pay little or no attention to this, but then it is not easy to distract sheep from the important things in life.

Please don't get the idea that I have a field full of naked sheep; the amount of wool lost is tiny. For some reason only my crows seem to follow this pattern. The many local migrants that pass overhead seem too wary to stop over for nest material. For some reason, the living fiber from the animal is preferred to the bits and pieces of wool lying around hedgerow and fence.

I wonder why other birds do not follow this practice. I live in hopes of seeing a Great Blue Heron, or a Brown Thrasher, or even a Green-wing Teal on a sheep's back; the colours would be fetching indeed.

Ian MacQuarrie
New Dominion
